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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of the Problem**

How can catechetical programs in preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation be experienced less as burdensome obligations and more as enriching encounters? How can familiarity with the concepts used to understand Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation lead to deeper reflection and internalization? How can sacramental catechesis lead to a lasting difference beyond the *salu-salo* after the christening, or when the novelty of lining up to receive Communion has faded, or long after the confirmands' certificates have been issued? This project presents modules that attempt to answer these questions.

#### **Significance of the Project**

In many urban Filipino parishes today, those who request the Sacraments of Initiation are made to attend one or two catechism sessions in the case of Baptism and a few more in the case of the Eucharist and Confirmation. Preparatory programs take the form of lectures delivered in ways similar to those observed in classroom settings. Following well-developed lesson plans, catechists expound on Catholic belief about the sacraments and what will happen during their celebration. Parents and godparents of newborn babies, first communicants, and confirmands fulfill what is required of them and learn what they are supposed to do during the liturgy, but shortly after the reception of the sacraments, most just disappear into the Sunday crowd, wanting

no more than to sit silent in the pews--if they find themselves inside the church at all.<sup>1</sup> This project hopes to improve the outcome of these preparatory programs by proposing a number of experimental catechetical modules.

These experimental catechetical modules also answer an expressed need of Filipino catechists. In his 2003 report to Rome, Most. Rev. Leonardo Legaspi, then chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, points out the inadequacy of teaching materials as the main difficulty of catechists.<sup>2</sup> Citing the results of the National Catechetical Survey accomplished in 2000, he echoes the catechists' desire for more audio-visual resources (expressed by 41.2 percent of respondents), references for catechists (35.3 percent), and lesson plans (29.5 percent).<sup>3</sup> This project aims to answer these needs and aid in the development of effective teaching strategies that can lead to mature, committed Christian lives of ongoing discipleship by outlining experimental catechetical modules inspired by the three insights from the New Testament.

### **Approach and Methodology**

Guided by three insights from the New Testament, namely, the centrality of Jesus Christ, the importance of community, and the power of the image, this project describes modules for

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<sup>1</sup>Because of the unavailability of scientific studies on the results of existing preparatory programs for the Sacraments of Initiation, this writer can rely only on his observations and the experience of catechists he has worked with in Marikina and Payatas.

<sup>2</sup>Leonardo Legaspi, "Catechesis and Catholic Education in the Philippines: The Reality in Context and the Strategic Response," <http://eccceonline.org/commission/report/reporttorome.htm> (accessed 10 January 2009).

<sup>3</sup>"National Survey on the Catechetical Situation in the Pastoral Setting," <http://eccceonline.org/commission/report/appendix-c.htm> (accessed 10 January 2009).

Filipinos in urban parishes preparing for the Sacraments of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation--the three sacraments that parish catechists are most concerned with and the three sacraments that initiate and lead Catholics to greater involvement in and commitment to the faith.

### **The First Guiding Insight: The Centrality of Jesus Christ**

“The center of our Christian Faith is Jesus Christ. Hence he is the heart and center of catechesis” (Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) 464). The “intended learning outcome” of catechesis is not just to become dogmatic experts on Christ but to become his humble “apprentices,” not just to know *about* Jesus, but to know Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Paul says it more eloquently and most definitely:

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:7-8a).

For Paul, because righteousness comes from God through Christ, what saves us is faith in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

The Synoptic Gospels can all be read as faith testaments answering the question “Who is Jesus?” But the centrality of Christ is most evident in the Fourth Gospel, which also has the most fully developed Christology in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas Groome, “Spirituality as Purpose and Process of Catechesis,” in *The Echo Within: Emerging Issues in Religious Education*, ed. Mary Collins and Kate Dooley (Allen, Texas: Thomas More, 1997), 161.

<sup>5</sup>Dianne Bergant and Robert Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1989), 1167.

<sup>6</sup>James Dunn, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:987.

In the Gospel of John, the verb *believe* almost always takes Jesus Christ as its object (see John 4:21; 5:38; 5:46; 6:29; 6:30; 8:31; 8:45; and 8:46). Other instances of *believe* take the form of believing Jesus' words (see John 2:22; 4:50; and 5:47) or believing in Jesus' name (see John 1:12; 2:23; and 3:18). A man's words or a man's name can stand for all that the man is, his very self.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Jesus Christ is still the object of belief in these instances. *Believe* is also used absolutely or without a stated object (see John 1:50; 3:12; 3:18; 4:41; 4:42; 4:53; 5:44; 6:47; 6:69; 8:24; 9:38; 11:15; 11:40; 14:29; 16:31; 19:35; 20:8; and 20:29). Even in these passages, it is clear that Jesus Christ is again the implied object.

But in John, the verb *believe*, when used positively, occurs most commonly following the phrase construction believe in me / in him / in the son / in the son of man, with the object of the preposition *in* referring to Jesus (see John 2:11; 3:15, 16; 3:18; 3:36; 4:39; 6:29; 6:35; 6:40; 7:31; 7:38; 7:39; 7:48; 8:30; 9:35; 9:36; 10:42; 11:25; 11:26; 11:45; 11:48; 12:42; 12:44; 12:46; 14:1; 14:12; 16:9; and 17:20). In these phrases, the preposition *in* is the translation of εἰς. But εἰς can also be translated as *into*, which denotes a movement towards something--or in this case, someone.

Replacing *in* with *into* can alert us to a deeper message: Jesus Christ is not simply the object of belief; we must insert our lives and our very selves *into* him. Guided by this insight, catechesis should immerse the faithful and help them plunge into the life and person of Christ. To believe *into* Jesus is to witness to him and to follow him, and to become his disciples. Guided by this insight, catechesis should help form the faithful into committed disciples of Christ. How do the modules of this pastoral project strive to do this? We turn again to a pastoral lesson learned from John.

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<sup>7</sup>L. L. Morris, "Faith," in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d edition, ed. D. R. W. Wood (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 358.

In John 4:39, we read of how the neighbors of the Samaritan woman at the well began to believe in Jesus: “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’”

But the Samaritans did not stop with the woman’s testimony:

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world” (John 4: 40-42).

Faith is nourished by deepening our encounter with Jesus, and this is what happened to the Samaritans who invited Jesus to stay with them for two days. The first disciples also received the benefit of this encounter when they asked Jesus, “Where are you staying?” and “stayed with him that day” (John 1:38-39). If we want to help others grow in faith, we must lead them to a real and deep encounter with Jesus. In John 1:45, Philip finds Nathanael and tells him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” But Nathanael doubted and questioned “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Philip’s only response was to bring him to Jesus: “Come and see” (John 1:46). In the same way, catechesis should not stop with what catechists say about Jesus. Catechesis should give the faithful the opportunity to meet Jesus and relate with him intimately.

The centrality of Christ in the Gospel of John can also be seen when we read the message of John 7:1 to John 10:21 as Jesus fulfilling the hopes which Israel celebrates during the Feast of the Tabernacles. This very important celebration has three main elements: the water libation ceremony, the ceremony of light, and the rite of facing the temple.

The water libation ceremony, which began with a fetching of water from the Pool of Siloam, was linked to a coming of a Moses-like teacher who will draw water from the well of the



Torah and who will teach from the well of God.<sup>8</sup> In John 7:14-18, Jesus is presented as fulfilling this expectation:

About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished at it, saying, “How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?” Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.

The water libation ceremony was a request for a superabundance of rain. The water that was fetched earlier was poured into vessels positioned on the altar. From these vessels, the water would flow out onto the altar. This was linked with the Ezekiel’s description of the waters of life flowing from the threshold of the Temple (see Ezekiel 47:1-5).<sup>9</sup> In John 7:37-38, Jesus proclaims how this has come true in him: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.” Jesus is the source of living water. Here we are reminded of Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman at the well: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10).

During the ceremony of light, four menorahs were set up in the center of the court of women of the Temple. Israelite men danced under these lights every night during the week-long Feast of the Tabernacles, and during the festivities, Jerusalem was described as not having a courtyard that did not reflect the light from the Temple.<sup>10</sup> Parallel to this, Jesus in John 8:12

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<sup>8</sup>Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel Harrington (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998), 234.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 235.

testifies to himself, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Every morning during the seven days of the feast, the priests would proceed to the east gate of the Temple area and wait for the sun to rise. At first light, they would turn their backs on the sun and face the Temple saying, “Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned towards the Lord.” They also sing the final words of the *Hallel*, “You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.”<sup>11</sup> As if in answer to this, Jesus in John 8:28 says, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am . . . .” The irony here is that the Jews do not recognize Jesus and even try to stone him (see John 8:59).

After the seven days of celebrating in booths or tents, there was an additional day, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which recalled the protection of Yahweh during the Exodus and God's care and guidance as people dwelt in tents during their wilderness experience.<sup>12</sup> Fittingly, this section in John ends with Jesus describing himself as the good shepherd (see John 10:1-21).

The Feast of Tabernacles was the most popular of the three pilgrimage feasts of the Jews. Josephus describes it as particularly sacred and especially important to the Hebrews.<sup>13</sup> Because of this, we can see how the Feast of Tabernacles in John can be representative of all Jewish feasts. That the Israelites referred to the Feast of Tabernacles simply as “the feast” (see I Kings 8:2, 65; 2 Chronicles 7:8; Nehemiah 8:14; Isaiah 30:29; and Ezekiel 45:23) further strengthens

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 235-36.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 233-34.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 233.

this interpretation. Thus, John's message that Jesus fulfilled the hopes of the Feast of the Tabernacles can be expanded, and we can say that Jesus fulfills all the hopes of all Jewish feasts, celebrations, and liturgies. Jesus fulfills all hopes--period.

Applying this to our celebrations and liturgies, we, too, can say that Jesus fulfills all the sacraments. He is the source, the primary agent, and the goal of all sacramental activity.

As "SOURCE," Christ is the one in whom all the sacraments are rooted and from whom they derive their efficacy. As "PRIMARY AGENT," he is the one who, through the actions and the words of the minister celebrating the various sacraments, baptizes, confirms, forgives and reconciles, heals, offers himself in sacrifice, binds in faithful love, and consecrates for service. As "GOAL," of all sacraments, Christ is the perfection toward which our life on earth tends. Not only does he challenge us to a response of love, but he effectively empowers us, through the Holy Spirit, to grow into his fullness, i.e., to attain the perfection of holiness that he is (CFC 1526).

Catechesis should therefore be always rooted in Christ and help the faithful be more rooted in him. But not just in him--in John 12:44, Jesus himself says, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me." Catechesis should immerse and plunge the faithful into the Triune God.

### **The Second Guiding Insight: The Importance of Community**

In the Gospels, Jesus called individuals to follow him and form a community of disciples. In Acts, we read the story of the formation of a Spirit-filled missionary community whose essential role was to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ.<sup>14</sup> In Paul, Christ continues his mission through the community. The Church, therefore, is "the ongoing arena for the activity of God on earth. The use of the catchphrase 'the body of Christ' intends to underscore the

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<sup>14</sup>Robert Wall, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:1106.

continuity between Jesus' messianic mission and the Church's mission within the history of God's salvation."<sup>15</sup>

The importance of community can also be seen in a reading of John 14:2a ("In my Father's house there are many dwelling places") that is different from the traditional interpretation of heaven having many mansions, apartments or rooms for us.<sup>16</sup>

The expression "my Father's house" is used before in John 2:16, in the context of Jesus cleansing the Temple, his Father's house. In this pericope, the understanding of Temple shifts from the actual building in Jerusalem to the person or body of Jesus himself. Jesus is his Father's house; Jesus is the dwelling place of the Father. In John 14, there is a further shift of the understanding of Temple to the community.<sup>17</sup>

We can prove this, first, by pointing out that house can refer not only to a physical structure but, by metonymy, a family or a household.<sup>18</sup> Second, dwelling places, *μοναί*, resonates with the many other dwellings described in John 14, some using the cognates of the verb *μεινω*, to remain, to abide, or to dwell:<sup>19</sup> The Father dwells (*μενων*) in Jesus (John 14:10); the Spirit of truth dwells (*μενει*) with the believers (John 14:17); the Father and Jesus will make their dwelling (*μονην*) with the believer (John 14:23). Against the traditional interpretation of

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Herbert Schneider, "Module 8: The Last Supper" (class notes, Loyola School of Theology, 2008), 8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, vol. 4, *Baker's Greek New Testament Library* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 278.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 258.

heavenly places where the believers can dwell, the three passages just cited show that the action of dwelling belongs not to the believers but to the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit. Mary Coloe concludes:

It is a “descending” movement from the divine realm to the human . . . . The divine indwelling in the midst of the community makes it appropriate to speak of the community as a living Temple. The community is the House (household) of God.<sup>20</sup>

The importance of the community is most evident in the passages about the Paraclete in the Gospel of John.

In the Old Testament, we observe tandem relationships that feature a principal figure who dies and leaves another to take his place, continue his work, and interpret his message. Illustrations of this are the Moses-Joshua and the Elijah-Elisha partnerships. In these, we see a secondary figure patterned so closely after the first that one can say Joshua is another Moses and Elisha, another Elijah. Joshua led the Jews across the Jordan (Joshua 3) as Moses led the Israelites to cross the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-29) before. The miracles which Elisha performed were of the same style as Elijah’s.<sup>21</sup>

In John, we observe a similar relationship between the Paraclete and Jesus. Whatever is said of the Paraclete is also said of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> To note a few examples, the Paraclete comes forth from the Father (John 15:26), and so does Jesus (John 16: 27-28). The Paraclete will teach the disciples (John 14:26) as Jesus taught them (John 7:14). The Paraclete is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26); Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

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<sup>20</sup>Mary Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), 163.

<sup>21</sup>Raymond Brown, “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-1967): 120.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

Raymond Brown asserts that the parallelism between the ministry of the Paraclete and the ministry of Jesus is too close to be coincidental. As “another Paraclete” (John 14:15), the Paraclete is actually another Jesus following the pattern of tandem relationships in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> But there is one major difference between the presence of the Paraclete and the presence of Jesus during his ministry: the Paraclete cannot be seen by the world because he is within the disciples (John 14:17), and as we said earlier, abiding within the community. Thus, Brown concludes, “the only way that the Paraclete can exercise his ministry is through Christians and their way of life and the way they bear witness.”<sup>24</sup>

Catechesis should therefore awaken the faithful to the presence of the Spirit in community, take advantage of this presence, and empower the community to bear witness to this presence. It is from within community that catechesis will lead us to the importance of community. And it is also to the community that we will be able to live out in service what we learn in catechesis.

### **The Third Guiding Insight: The Power of the Image**

In the Synoptic Gospels, we see the power of the image clearly when Jesus himself uses parables to talk about the Kingdom of God. These parables may be absent in the Fourth Gospel, but John still utilizes imagery to deliver the message of who Jesus is.

As high as the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is, the Johannine Jesus is accessible because of the use of images to communicate who Jesus is. In John, Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35), the light of the world (John 8:12), the gate for the sheep (John 10:7), the good

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 132.

shepherd (John 10:11), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and the true vine (John 15:1).

Less poetic and more prosaic are the different models the Gospels use to show different responses of faith. We can read Mary, Joseph, Herod, Peter, the woman afflicted with hemorrhage, the Samaritan leper, and many others as representative figures and try to see ourselves in them. The catechist should again take note of this and take advantage of models in expounding about the faith.

We are not discounting the value of conceptual definitions in helping us articulate our faith. We only intend to remind catechists of the power of the image. Images strike at one's heart from the detour through the senses. Aside from accessing the affect, or perhaps because they access the affect, images endure in our memories. One proof for this is the experience of many homilists: The people they preach to often remember the stories they use, but are seldom able to recall the main point of their homilies. We can address this by making sure that the images we use already contain our main point, even if the main point is there only as a seed.

Images capture reality, but do not lock reality up in a cage. To use images to explain images, the image is both a mirror that reflects what things are and a window through which we can see what things can be. As Paul Ricoeur's famous aphorism proclaims, the symbol gives rise to thought. The image can lead to conceptual thinking, but also to other images, and in dynamics of *poesis*, other possibilities.

Most of the images that this project will use come from mass media. Why use media? Peter Horsfield sees in our times a dis-enchantment with modernity, a realization that the modern world, together with its science, and its progress, has failed in many of its promises. This has resulted in a renewed search for re-enchantment, for meaning and for mystery. And it is to media

that people have turned to search for re-enchantment. As the title of one of Horsfield's articles plainly states, today, the media is the major source and center of religious activity.<sup>25</sup> People are already immersed in media, and so we meet them where they are.

Horsfield recounts a simple encounter:

For practical purposes, people now have more religious experiences in movie theatres, watching television, or listening to recorded music than they do in most churches. I had a conversation with a bus driver just recently who talked about being at home on his own one Saturday afternoon, putting on old Countdown tapes, and singing along to Lionel Ritchie and Whitney Houston with tears in his eyes. "It was a great experience," he said.<sup>26</sup>

We can turn to Ricoeur's theory of metaphor to help us understand the power of the image. Metaphors work by way of tension and create new worlds. In a metaphor, two things that do not go together are brought together. A metaphor does not just clothe an idea but reduces the shock engendered by two incompatible ideas. An appearance of kinship is presented where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship. In the apparent misunderstanding between two terms, a "category mistake" which is also a "calculated error," a new meaning springs up between two terms that previous systems of classification ignored or did not allow.<sup>27</sup> Images are not only receptacles of meaning--images as metaphors create new meaning.

But metaphors can grow old and lose their power. Who now even notices that there is a metaphor in the expressions the foot of a mountain or the foot of a chair?<sup>28</sup> When too commonly used, what once opened up a new way of seeing things can actually hide deeper meanings. We

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<sup>25</sup>Peter Horsfield, "The Media: The Major Source and Centre of Religious Activity in Contemporary Society," in *The Mediated Spirit* (Melbourne, Australia: Uniting Church in Australia, 2002), CD-ROM.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 50-51.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 52.



see this, too, in religion, when many of our symbols and images lose their power. The cross, for example, has been domesticated. Its shock value as a terrible way to die has been diluted, and many times, the cross becomes just another decoration--nailed on walls, printed on shirts, even hanging from ears. The use of images from mass media, new metaphors for what we believe, can be used to revivify our traditional images and see them again with new eyes.

In using media, we are not just jumping on the bandwagon. By pointing out how images we see on television, in movies, in advertisements, and on the web can be used to talk about the faith, we are giving people examples of how to more directly connect media and our beliefs. The often unarticulated search for re-enchantment in media is given direction and focus. To put it simply, we are teaching people how to find God in all things.

### **The Modules in General**

Taking off from the three insights above, the modules that will be presented seek to provide the faithful with an encounter with Jesus by being rooted in his life as presented in Scripture and by rooting people in prayer. Integral to the modules that will follow is some introduction to a prayer method that will be promoted during catechesis. The importance of a personal encounter with Jesus cannot be overstressed because faith is not just an adherence to a set of beliefs. Faith is a personal response to a Person revealing himself.

The modules that will be outlined in the succeeding chapters also seek to help make the faithful more involved in community. Sacraments should be able to bond the believer not just with Christ, but with his mystical body, the Church. Much of the learning that will hopefully take place is designed to be experienced in community and in sharing. Because of this, the modules that will be described require more sessions for the preparatory programs. Spoon-feeding

information may be more efficient time-wise, but having participants thresh out insights in community may be more effective in the long run. Sharing thoughts, feelings, questions, and attempt at answers is integral to these programs. In recollections this writer has given, the opportunity for sharing usually creates the biggest impact on the participants. How can this be explained? First, it is only when we attempt to articulate something that we can say we have taken the first step towards understanding it--or knowing just how much we do not understand about it. Saying something in front of others also helps us own what we say. Also, when we listen to other share, we may get more insights on what we ourselves are experiencing. As the New Testament asserts, the Spirit dwells in the community, and so we can be assured that the faithful have something to teach each other.

The sharing envisioned in these modules will not just be a sharing of insights and reflections but also of work and other experiences. Rootedness in community will also help keep the faithful connected to the Church even after the preparatory programs for the Sacraments of Initiation.

Community will be the special locus of learning in these modules. But more than just provide the opportunity to learn, community will also provide the opportunity for those who will undergo these modules to live out what they learn in service.

In pursuing the two thrusts above, the modules will rely on the assistance of multimedia images to deliver their message. In a lecture about the demands of evangelizing in Asia today, Adolfo Nicolas, drawing on his long experience as a missionary, asserts that people today are allergic to labored thinking. If they have to strain to understand a message, it most probably is

not worth the effort.<sup>29</sup> The image is able to simplify an issue, but the encapsulation in the image can also invite deeper reflection. Thus, in the image, we have a quick summary that does not impoverish meaning.

Psychology has shown that human thinking happens in two complementary modes. One is associated with the left hemisphere of the brain and is characterized to be predominantly logical, linear, sequential, analytic, and objective. The modules that will be presented will have these features but will also try to tap into the right side of the brain. This project will try to approach catechesis in an intuitive and non-verbal manner with the use of images, in a holistic and synthetic manner that involves integration with the faithful's life, and in a relational manner through learning with and from community.<sup>30</sup>

### **Media as Culture**

Current studies on the relationship of religion and media have gone beyond considering them as autonomous and clearly delineated realities. Stewart Hoover asserts:

There is, in fact, a great deal of evidence that religion and the media are coming together to occupy some of the same spaces in contemporary life. They are converging . . . . What this means is that religion now more than ever exists in the media sphere.<sup>31</sup>

Many theologians and religious educators still see the mass media as simply tools for communicating ideas and sending information. The relatively young area of media studies is promoting “the concept of the mass media as integrated power and meaning-generating systems

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<sup>29</sup>Adolfo Nicolas, “Challenges of the Church in Asia” (lecture given at the Jaime Cardinal Sin Center, Loyola School of Theology, 21 February 2007).

<sup>30</sup>For a fuller treatment of the two sides of the brain, see Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (London: Souvenir Press, 1981).

<sup>31</sup>Stewart Hoover, “Religion in a Media Age,” <http://www.iscmrc.org/english/hoover1.html> (accessed 13 January 2009).

which are actively creating a mythological and heuristic milieu to serve particular social and economic interests.”<sup>32</sup>

Research projects today on media and religion delve into theories of regeneration, which Lynn Schofield Clark illustrates using the case of a twenty-year-old woman who had stopped accepting the traditional beliefs she had grown up with:

When I asked her what television show was most like her own beliefs, she said: “It would have to be X-Files... There’s no doubt in my mind that we are not the only intelligent life... God was a higher being, how do we know he wasn’t an alien? On X-Files, Mulder, he would say something like that, how do we know God’s not an alien?” In this example, we can see a process whereby the media text--or Jodie’s reading into the media text--helps to inform and reinforce what she says are her religious beliefs. In fact, they provide a framework for understanding her beliefs and a language by which she communicates those beliefs to others. She looks at the character of Mulder as the doubter of institutions and projects that he might say something about God that she herself holds as a belief. This is what I call regeneration: taking a media text and then from it, regenerating a meaning that in turn reinforces and informs a religious understanding.<sup>33</sup>

Theories about how and when certain mediated images and stories become meaningful for their audiences and principles that should guide one in deciding which media element to use, when to use them, and how to use them are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the modules that will be presented will shift from the merely instrumental use of media and explore media as culture. This will be done, first, through the use of regeneration of secular stories and images and implemented in group media as will be explained in the next pages. Secondly, these modules will also take advantage of the novel ways of interacting created by new media as typified by the Web 2.0 (also to be explained in the next pages).

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<sup>32</sup>Peter Horsfield, “Teaching Theology in a New Cultural Environment,” in *The Mediated Spirit* (Melbourne, Australia: Uniting Church in Australia, 2002), CD-ROM.

<sup>33</sup>Lynn Schofield Clark, “Building Bridges between Theology and Media Studies,” <http://www.iscmrc.org/english/clark2.htm> (accessed 13 January 2009).

## Group Media

These modules will take advantage of group media. The Latin American bishops' document "On Social Communication in Latin America" in 1979 (from hereon referred to as PUEBLA) stresses the need for this way of communicating:

Without neglecting the necessary and urgent presence of the mass-oriented media, it is urgent that we intensify our use of the Media of Group Communication. Besides being less costly and easier to handle, they offer the possibility of dialogue and they are more suited to a person-to-person type of evangelization that will evoke truly personal adhesion and commitment (PUEBLA 1090).

The 1979 Synod of the Archdiocese of Manila describes group media as the less expensive types of media which require fewer people to handle them and which are better adapted to group participation.<sup>34</sup> Manuel Olivera, one of the pioneers of group media in Latin America, sharpens this description further by adding the following criteria: They encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences about themes relevant to everyday life; presented artistically, the group can penetrate beyond the media used to reflect more deeply in the course of a guided discussion; and usually brief, they are means which are technically and financially within reach of the group.<sup>35</sup> Examples are: photo language, drama-liturgy, recorded music, and video clips. Compared with mass media, group media is dialogic rather than monologic, directed to known participants rather than to an anonymous crowd, generate direct and immediate reaction rather than indirect reaction that is difficult to gauge, and are more focused on involvement rather than on information alone.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Community: An Introduction to Social Communication* (Manila: Logos Publications, 1994), 135.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 169.

The method of group communication can be presented in this manner: In an atmosphere conducive to sharing, a facilitator presents a type of group media, sets some time for silence to let the media sample stimulate and evoke reflection, and moderates a discussion that is rooted in what is currently happening to the group members. Experiences of pastoral workers from the field also attest to the empowerment generated by this type of interaction.<sup>37</sup> With group media, the high costs of production are taken out of the equation because existing content--even secular media, which is actually more preferable--can be used. Buying airtime is not necessary anymore because all a group needs are a blackboard, a music or video player, and a television set. When available, a computer and a liquid crystal display (LCD) projector can also be of much help. Cheaper yet more dynamic, group media has been embraced by many small Christian groups or basic ecclesial communities especially in Latin America and Africa.

The media elements that will be used in group activities can also be posted online using free resources such as weblogs and social networking sites. Additional images, sound files, video clips, and blog entries can also be uploaded as a form of take-home reflections in between catechesis sessions. This though still does not fully take advantage of the Internet today.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 171-73.

## The Web 2.0

Today the Internet calls for a growing integration of written, audio and visual communications and therefore challenges the media at the service of the Holy See to enlarge and intensify their collaboration . . . [Because the Catholic Church cannot allow its message to be outside] the spaces in which numerous young people navigate in search of answers and of meaning for their lives, you must seek ways to spread voices and images of hope in new formats.

– Pope Benedict XVI to members of the Vatican media<sup>38</sup>

The Internet today or the Web 2.0, as surfers have christened it, is not so much about published pages of content as it is about people. The focus has shifted from information to interaction. From the hands of a few so-called experts, power has passed on to the many amateurs who use the WWW to blog or post random and collected thoughts about anything and everything and to build networks with real and virtual friends. “Millions of minds that would have just drowned in obscurity”<sup>39</sup> are creating a whirlpool of inter-connecting and collaborating sea of knowledge and relationships. The point of the Web 2.0 is to tell others what you are thinking, feeling, and doing and what you are interested in and passionate about, in order to know what others are thinking, feeling, and doing and to get them to react to or interested in and even passionate about the same things that you are. And this can be facilitated by the fact that online interaction is less threatening than sharing in front of a whole group.

The critical role that sharing plays in this project is one of the reasons why it is entitled Catechesis 2.0. Taking off from the definition of the Web 2.0, this project also seeks to create a “whirlpool of inter-connecting and collaborating sea of knowledge and relationships.” The driving force of the Web 2.0 is the impetus to connect. This project aims to help those being

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<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Cindy Wooden, “Pope Says Vatican Must Be on Internet with Word, Sound, Images,” <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0806331.htm> (accessed 11 January 2009).

<sup>39</sup>Lev Grossman, “Time Person of the Year: You,” *Time* (December 25, 2006 – January 1, 2007), 22.

initiated into the faith to connect to God and connect to their communities with the aid of still images, sounds, video clips, and the web.

The interactivity, the on-going conversation, and the collaboration engendered by the Web 2.0 cannot be made to fit in the old linear models of communication that present messages as encoded by a sender and then transmitted to a receiver who decodes them. Instead, more participatory models that see communication not as a single event but a process of sharing that results in convergences which lead in a cyclic way to greater convergences.<sup>40</sup>

Together with changing models of communication, our ways of being Church must also change. Writing more than thirty years before the Web 2.0, Avery Dulles contrasts the old media, which was concerned with amassing information, classifying data, and synthesizing them logically, with the contemporary electronic culture, which invites “personal participation, depth of awareness, a sense of wholeness, immediacy, and the thrill of discovery.”<sup>41</sup> The promise of the “contemporary electronic culture” Dulles described has never been realized as it is now incarnated in the Internet of today. Changes in the media of communications have had vast repercussions on the Church’s understanding of its own nature and mission.<sup>42</sup> This is why Dulles asserts that the hierarchical-scholastic and the biblical-kerygmatic styles of doing theology, un-nuanced and understood separately, are not the best models for today. In the hierarchical-scholastic model, revelation is found in dogmas disseminated by magisterial teaching to the lay. In the biblical-kerygmatic model, revelation is found in the proclamation of the early Church as enshrined in the New Testament. Though very much different, both schools are very

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<sup>40</sup>Eilers, *Communicating in Community*, 21-23.

<sup>41</sup>Avery Dulles, “The Church Is Communications,” *Catholic Mind* 69 (1971): 13.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.



ecclesiocentric and consider revelation as something delivered once and for all nineteen centuries ago to the first teachers, the Apostles.<sup>43</sup> Dulles points to the secular-dialogic model as more apt for today. In this model, revelation is not confined to the magisterium or to the bible. God is “where the action is,” in our contemporary experience, addressing us through the signs of the times. The Church then comes to be viewed as the community of those who are open to what God is saying, even though this may not be explicitly connected to what he said before through Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

Are we ready for such involvement? Are we ready for such a participatory Church? Are we ready to try new models of being Church?

Karl Rahner writes about the use of the word democracy in new models of being Church:

. . . many structures and institutions may be built into the Church which give the people of the Church a more active role than that which they have previously had in the life of the Church itself. In other words . . . these new structures and institutions may signify ‘democratic’ rights within the Church. In fact many changes in this direction have in practice already been achieved within the Church, even though we may hold the opinion that still more changes of the same kind will have to take place in the future.<sup>45</sup>

Edward Schillebeeckx though would be quick to note the danger of de-emphasizing the role of authority and would urge “the interplay of official teaching authority and the teaching authority of believers and their theologians.”<sup>46</sup> Dulles, too, though he promotes the secular-dialogic model does not discount the importance of our traditional dogmatic heritage and the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>45</sup>Karl Rahner, “Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church,” in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), XIV: 19.

<sup>46</sup>Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 233.

centrality of Scripture.<sup>47</sup> Because the online interaction envisioned by these modules will be moderated by catechists who are presumed to be firmly rooted in the official teaching of the Church and in Scripture, hopefully there will be a balance among all these essential elements.

### **Limitations**

The modules that will be described are designed around concepts central to the sacrament they expound on, concepts that are part of the Catholic tradition but explained in non-traditional ways to engender deeper reflection, sharing with community, and personal integration. They do not claim to cover all the aspects of the Sacraments of Initiation. First of all, this can never be done because of the richness of the sacraments. It would be a mistake to even attempt to say everything about the sacraments. Talking about symbols, Joseph Gelineau says that a symbol is more than what we can explicitly understand by it and more than what we can put into words about it. He narrates a simple experience:

I have often noticed, for example, how the faithful like the censuring of the altar at the beginning of the mass. I asked what meaning it had for them. “I don’t know,” they reply. I persevered, remarking that it was an oriental custom absent from our culture; that often people felt nothing about it, and that the sticky smell of our imported incense in fact upset some people (including the singers) . . . . “Perhaps, but I like it.” Likewise if someone asked my why I was moved by a particular passage of Bach, what could I say, except talk about musical theory and style, which are neither the cause nor the explanation for what I feel? The relationship of the message to my reaction is not “cause and effect.” The mechanism is infinitely more complex and richer, because it is creative.<sup>48</sup>

Catechesis should not just be confined to the order of knowledge, but should be a process that moves people towards appreciation and even devotion. Making sure that the basics are

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<sup>47</sup>Dulles, “The Church Is Communications,” 12.

<sup>48</sup>Joseph Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 98.

covered but not explaining everything will hopefully invite such a movement by encouraging people to ask what the sacraments mean for them.

Primarily written for a parish setting, the modules that will be presented should not be implemented as they are written here. They are intended, first and foremost, to propose possibilities of how learning can happen for specific target audiences and challenge how catechesis is currently being done. These modules can be used in seminars and workshops for catechists to help them brainstorm and plan for their preparatory catechetical programs. Or, after adapting these modules to their particular clientele, catechists can build programs around them or use them to supplement existing programs.

These modules are experimental. Though already delivered and tested in one form or another by this writer in various occasions, they have not yet been evaluated in a scientific manner. A study of the implementation and outcome of these modules is beyond the scope of this project.

The success of these modules depends greatly on facilitators who have the skills to adapt these modules to particular contexts, to draw out insights rather than spoon-feed them to participants, to encourage and process meaningful exchanges, and to address unexpected questions that may come up--especially about some of the media elements. It is beyond the scope of this project to provide a training program for these facilitators. However, in their consideration of these modules, in their attempts to adapt it to their particular situations, and in their discernment about what media elements to use and how to present them, the facilitators will hopefully become more comfortable and more adept in catechizing using new media.

The modules envisioned by this project require audio-visual equipment. This may present problems to some parishes without LCD projectors and portable computers. This is why this

project will also present an alternative way of delivering multimedia content using video CD (VCD) players and television sets (see Appendix D).

### **Basic Bibliography**

This project was guided by: Herbert Schneider's unpublished class notes on the Synoptic Gospels and on John (Loyola School of Theology, 2007-2008); *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Francis Moloney's *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel Harrington (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998); Mary Coloe's *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001); *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 2005); and Franz-Josef Eilers' *Communicating in Community: An Introduction to Social Communication* (Manila: Logos Publications, 1994).

In identifying the central concepts that will be discussed in the modules, this project was influenced by Ester Frago and Josephine Dango's *Called to Meet Christ in Scriptures, Church, and Sacraments* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila High School, 2001) and Isabel Blevins' annotated edition of *Liturgy and Worship: A Course on Prayer and Sacraments* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1998). Resources recommended for facilitators are: Lawrence Mick's *Forming the Assembly to Celebrate the Mass* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002) and *Forming the Assembly to Celebrate Sacraments* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002); Dale Fushek and Bill Dodds' *Your One-Stop Guide to the Sacraments* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 2003) and Clifford Howell's *Mean What You Say: On the Short Responses on the Mass* (London: Deacon Books, 1965).

This project is submitted with a companion CD-ROM of all the multimedia files and other resources mentioned in the modules. In the Appendices are various other resources, activities, a proposed rite for the communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a guide to help catechists access more multimedia elements from YouTube and deliver these using simple VCD players and television sets.

We began by asking: How can catechetical programs in preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation be experienced less as burdensome obligations and more as enriching encounters? How can familiarity with the traditional formulae used to understand Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation be deepened and internalized? How can sacramental catechesis lead to a lasting difference beyond the *salu-salo* after the christening, or when the novelty of lining up to receive Communion has faded, or long after the confirmands' certificates have been issued? The modules that will be described in the next three chapters will hopefully answer these three questions.